

Research Article

The Experience of the Madrasah Principal in Overcoming Teachers' Resistance to Educational Quality Innovation at MTs. Unggulan Fathussalam Muncar

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the experience of the madrasah principal in overcoming teachers' resistance to educational quality innovation at MTs. Unggulan Fathussalam Muncar through an empathy-based leadership approach and open communication. The research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the dynamics of change within this pesantren-based educational institution. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews with the madrasah principal, teachers, and staff, participatory observations, and documentation related to the implementation of innovation and communication strategies. The collected data is analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to identify key themes, including the role of empathetic leadership, open communication, and non-material incentives in reducing resistance and increasing teachers' participation. The findings reveal that the principal's humanistic approach, characterized by transparent communication and teacher involvement in the change process, successfully fosters a collaborative work environment. Non-material rewards also prove effective in strengthening teachers' intrinsic motivation and accelerating their acceptance of educational innovation. This study makes a significant contribution to understanding empathy-based leadership and the implementation of educational innovation in pesantren settings.

Keywords: Empathetic Leadership; Teacher Resistance; Educational Quality Innovation

1. INTRODUCTION

The process of innovation in the quality of education at MTs. Fathussalam Muncar often faces challenges in the form of resistance from some teachers who are worried about the proposed changes. The head of the madrasah in this institution realized that the resistance was caused not only by technical incompetence, but also by emotional factors, such as uncertainty and concern about the increased workload (Azzuhriyyah, 2024) (Babullah et al., 2024). To overcome this, the head of the madrasah adopts a more humanist approach, with open and transparent communication, so that teachers feel more valued and heard.

Madrasah heads hold regular meetings to explain the goals and benefits of innovation and provide opportunities for teachers to voice their concerns. In addition, the head of the madrasah also emphasized the importance of empathy-based leadership, by listening to complaints and providing solutions that can alleviate teachers' concerns, such as providing additional training to improve their ability to implement change. In addition, the head of the madrasah also implements non-material incentives as a form of reward for teachers who are active in supporting innovation, such as public recognition and award certificates. This not only encourages teachers to embrace change, but also creates a positive work climate, where teachers feel valued for their contributions. This approach has proven effective in reducing resistance and increasing teachers' active participation in the implementation of education quality innovations, thereby creating a more collaborative work culture and supporting the achievement of better educational goals (Nur Efendi & Muh Ibnu Sholeh, 2023; Mujahidin, 2023).

Previous research by Armiyanti et al., (2023) shows that leaders who can inspire and motivate teachers through clear and open communication are more successful in driving change in madrasahs. Armiyanti said that leaders who involve teachers in the process of change, by listening to and responding to their concerns, will find it easier to overcome resistance. This is in line with research findings that show that madrasah heads who communicate transparently and empathetically succeed in creating an environment that supports innovation. Other research also shows that resistance to educational

innovation can be minimized by providing non-material rewards such as public recognition and appreciation for teachers who support change (M. Hasbi Amiruddin, 2021). Amiruddin emphasized that non-material incentives can strengthen teachers' intrinsic motivation, increase their sense of belonging to innovation, and create a more positive work culture. These studies provide a strong theoretical foundation for understanding how empathy-based leadership and non-material rewards can reduce teacher resistance and encourage acceptance of educational innovation, as has been done at MTs. Fathussalam Muncar.

The novelty of this research lies in the humanist approach applied by the head of the madrasah at MTs. Fathussalam Muncar in overcoming teachers' resistance to educational quality innovation. In contrast to traditional approaches that focus more on technical and administrative aspects, this study highlights the importance of open and transparent communication and empathy-based leadership in the face of these challenges. The head of the madrasah does not only rely on formal instruction, but emphasizes more on constructive dialogue, so that the teacher feels listened to and appreciated. In addition, the implementation of non-material incentives as a reward for teachers who actively support innovation is also a distinguishing aspect of this research. This approach has proven effective in creating a collaborative work climate and reducing teachers' fears and worries about change. By integrating transformational leadership theories and non-material rewards, this research makes a new contribution to understanding the dynamics of change in the context of pesantren education, which often faces greater challenges in adopting innovation.

The purpose of this study is to analyze and understand how the empathy-based leadership approach and open communication applied by madrasah heads in MTs. Fathussalam Muncar's Excellence in Overcoming Teachers' Resistance to Education Quality Innovation can create a more collaborative work culture and support the implementation of change (Averina & Widagda, 2021). In the context of educational change that is often faced with resistance challenges, this study aims to provide insight into the role of madrasah heads in alleviating teachers' concerns, both emotionally and technically, with a humanist approach and involving them in every stage of innovation. An emphasis on open, transparent, and active listening to teachers' complaints is key in creating a positive climate. In addition, this study also aims to highlight the effectiveness of non-material incentives, such as public recognition and appreciation, in strengthening teachers' intrinsic motivation and strengthening their sense of belonging to the changes made. Thus, the purpose of this study is to provide a deeper understanding of how a more empathetic approach can reduce resistance and increase teacher participation in educational innovation, particularly in pesantren-based educational institutions.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method that will be used in this study is a qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was chosen because it aims to explore in depth the experience of madrasah heads in overcoming teachers' resistance to educational quality innovation in MTs. The case study was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the specific context that exists in this pesantren-based educational institution, as well as analyze the dynamics that occur in the application of innovation in that environment (Assyakurrohim et al., 2022; Siti Aimah, 2023). Data collection will be carried out through several techniques, namely in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation. In-depth interviews will be conducted with madrasah heads, teachers, and madrasah staff to gain diverse perspectives on the innovation implementation process and their response to change (Rahardjo, 2022). Participatory observation will be used to observe the interaction between madrasah heads and teachers during the change process, as well as how empathy-based communication and leadership are applied in daily practice (Assyakurrohim et al., 2022). Documentation, such as meeting minutes and training materials, will be obtained to analyze the steps taken by madrasah heads in dealing with resistance and supporting innovation. The collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, which allow researchers to identify the main themes that emerge from the experiences and perceptions of the research participants (Thalib, 2022). This analysis will focus on how humanist approaches, open communication, and non-material incentives affect teachers' attitudes and participation towards innovation. In addition, the analysis will also consider the social and emotional factors that influence teacher resistance, as well as how madrasah heads manage to create a work climate that supports change.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Role of Effective Communication in Easing Resistance

Effective communication is the key in overcoming teachers' resistance to educational quality innovation in private madrasahs. Madrasah heads who are able to convey information in a clear, open, and inclusive manner succeed in creating a common

understanding between madrasah management and teachers. In this context, communication is not only a tool to convey policies, but also a bridge to build trust and active participation from teachers (Salabi, 2024) (Rahayu, 2023). Many teachers feel anxious when a new policy is introduced, especially if it is perceived to increase their workload without any obvious benefit. However, the head of the madrasah who involved the teacher in the open dialogue process succeeded in reducing resistance and increasing the sense of belonging to the proposed changes.

Innovation in the quality of education at MTs. Fathussalam Muncar, effective communication is one of the factors in easing resistance that arises from teachers (Mujahidin, 2023). Madrasah heads realize that resistance comes not only from technical incompetence, but also from emotional factors, such as fear of change and concerns about increased workload (Fadhli & Sahir, 2020) (M. Hasbi Amiruddin, 2021). Therefore, open and transparent communication is consistently implemented to build trust and provide a clear understanding of the goals and benefits of innovation. One of the strategies used is to hold regular meetings that provide space for teachers to express their opinions and concerns. By listening to teachers' complaints and providing a solutional response, the head of the madrasah succeeded in creating a more collaborative and positive work atmosphere. Teachers who initially felt skeptical of change began to understand that innovation was not a threat, but an opportunity to improve the quality of learning. In addition, this two-way communication also strengthens teachers' sense of belonging to the innovations that are implemented, so that they are more open to participating in the change process.



Figure 1. Teachers Consortium Meeting

The **Figure 1**, shows the role of the head of MTs. Unggulan Fathussalam in conducting effective communication. This can be evidenced by the declining level of resistance to innovation. Teachers who were initially skeptical began to accept change after feeling heard and gained a better understanding of the purpose of innovation. Thus, this study confirms that there are approaches that can alleviate teacher resistance and increase their involvement in the implementation of educational innovations (Sergiy Gritsenko, Olga Karpun, 2023). This study shows that effective communication plays a significant role in easing teachers' resistance to educational quality innovation in MTs. Open and empathy-based communication allows teachers to feel more valued and understood, so they are better prepared to accept change. These findings suggest that resistance stems not solely from teachers' technical inability to adopt innovation, but also from psychological factors, such as uncertainty and fear of change. With clear communication and a discussion space provided by the head of the madrasah, teachers feel more confident in facing innovation, as they gain a better understanding of its goals and benefits. These findings are in line with research conducted by Sergiy Gritsenko, Olga Karpun, (2023), which states that leaders who are able to inspire and communicate effectively will be more successful in driving organizational change. Other research by Hargreaves (2003) theorists also emphasized that effective communication can build intrinsic motivation and create a more collaborative work culture. Thus, the results of this study strengthen the argument that transparent, empathy-based, and teacher involvement in every stage of change is the main key in overcoming resistance to educational innovation, especially in the context of pesantren-based educational institutions.

3.2 Empathy-Based Leadership Increases Teacher Trust

Empathy-based leadership is an important element in overcoming teachers' resistance to educational quality innovation in private madrasahs. Madrasah heads who are able to understand the emotional conditions and needs of teachers tend to be more successful in building relationships of mutual trust. Empathy in leadership includes the ability to listen to teachers' complaints without judgment, provide moral support, as well as offer solutions that are relevant to the situation they are facing. When teachers feel valued and understood, they are more motivated to be actively involved in efforts to improve the quality of education. This approach creates emotional bonds that strengthen trust and reduce anxiety about change (Mahyani & Hasibuan, 2024) (Salabi, 2024). Efforts to overcome teachers' resistance to educational quality innovation in MTs. Fathussalam Muncar, empathy-based leadership has proven to be an important factor in building teacher trust. The head of the madrasah not only acts as a leader who provides instructions, but also as a figure who understands the concerns and challenges faced by the teachers. By listening to their aspirations, providing appropriate solutions, and showing concern for their conditions, madrasah heads succeed in creating a more comfortable and supportive environment for teachers to accept change.

This approach is realized through open dialogue, moral support, and the provision of additional training that helps teachers adapt to the innovations being implemented. Over time, teachers who were initially hesitant began to feel more confident in the leadership of the madrasah head because they did not feel forced to change, but were accompanied in the transition process. This trust encourages more active participation in educational innovation and creates a more harmonious work culture (Hidayat & Ibrahim, 2023).

In an interview with one of the teachers, Mr. Zainnur, he said:

"I was worried about this change, but the head of the madrasah always listened to our complaints and tried to find a solution that was not burdensome. His caring and non-authoritarian attitude makes me believe that this innovation is indeed aimed at the common good."

The interviews show that empathy-based leadership not only reduces resistance, but also increases teachers' confidence in the innovations being implemented. When teachers feel cared for and supported, they are more open to accepting change and more eager to contribute to improving the quality of education (Sholeh, 2023). The results of this study show that empathy-based leadership plays an important role in increasing teachers' trust in educational innovation in MTs. When madrasah heads show empathy through active listening, moral support, and non-burdensome solutions, teachers feel more valued and supported. This trust is a key element in reducing their anxiety and resistance to change. Teachers who were initially hesitant began to realize that innovation was not just an administrative demand, but a joint effort to improve the quality of education. These results are in line with research conducted by Febrianty & Muhammad, (2023), which emphasizes that leaders who show empathy, give individualized attention, and understand the needs of subordinates will be more successful in building trust and increasing their motivation. In addition, leaders who have empathy are able to build better relationships with team members, thereby increasing their engagement and loyalty to the organization (Hasra et al., 2024). Thus, the results of this study reinforce that empathy-based leadership is not only effective in overcoming teachers' resistance to innovation, but also creates a more collaborative and harmonious work environment in supporting changes in the world of education.

3.3 Factors Driving Innovation Acceptance

In addition to material incentives such as financial allowances or awards, non-material incentives such as recognition and appreciation of teachers' efforts also play an important role in encouraging acceptance of educational innovation (Rahayu, 2023). Many teachers feel more valued when their performance is recognized, whether in the form of thank you, certificates of appreciation, or public recognition in front of peers. These non-material incentives can create a sense of pride and intrinsic motivation for teachers to continue to innovate, as they feel appreciated for their contribution to the development of the quality of education. Thus, madrasah heads who are wise in giving non-material rewards can create a positive work culture, which supports change and development in the madrasah (Fitria et al., 2023) (Averina & Widagda, 2021). In the implementation of educational quality innovation in MTs. Fathussalam Muncar, non-material incentives have proven to be an important factor in encouraging teachers' acceptance of change. The head of the madrasah understands that appreciation for the teacher's efforts and dedication does not always have to be in the form of material, but can also be in the form of public recognition, certificates of appreciation, or simply open praise in an official forum. This form of appreciation creates a sense of pride and increases the intrinsic motivation of teachers, so that they are more open to accepting and implementing the innovations introduced.

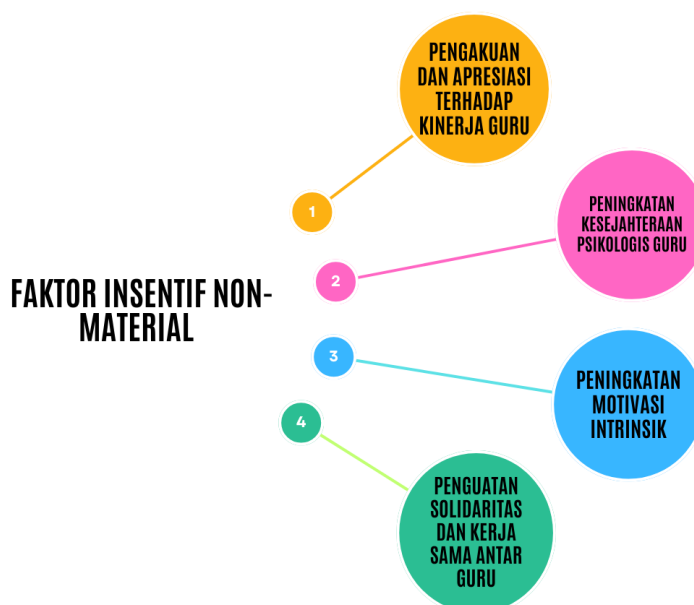


Figure 2. Non-Material Incentive Factors

Figure 2, shows that there are several factors that can increase their enthusiasm and participation in educational innovation. Among them are recognition and appreciation of teacher performance, improving teachers' psychological well-being, increasing intrinsic motivation, and strengthening solidarity and cooperation between teachers. This approach can be implemented through a variety of strategies, such as providing appreciation in teacher meetings, featuring profiles of innovative teachers in madrasah magazines, or giving them the opportunity to share best practices in internal training. With recognition for their contributions, teachers feel more valued and encouraged to continue to innovate in the learning process. The results of these findings show that non-material incentives play an important role in encouraging teachers' acceptance of educational quality innovations at MTs. Teachers who get recognition for their efforts and dedication feel more valued and motivated to participate in change. Awards in the form of praise, certificates, or public recognition are not just a form of appreciation, but also create a sense of ownership of the innovations that are applied. With increased intrinsic motivation, teachers are more open to accepting innovations and even taking the initiative to actively apply them in learning.

These findings are in line with research by Gugus, (2024) which states that intrinsic motivational factors, such as recognition and achievement, can increase a person's job satisfaction and productivity. In addition, research by (Clarissa et al., 2024) also emphasizes that non-material incentives contribute to creating a more positive work environment, increasing loyalty, and strengthening individual involvement in change. Thus, the results of this study reinforce that non-material awards are not just a form of appreciation, but also an effective strategy in overcoming teachers' resistance to innovation. When teachers feel valued and recognized, they are more motivated to support and develop innovations that are applied in the world of education, especially in a pesantren-based environment.

4. CONCLUSION

The success in overcoming teachers' resistance to educational quality innovation in MTs. Fathussalam's Flagship is greatly influenced by three things. First, effective communication plays an important role in overcoming teachers' resistance to change. Madrasah heads who implement open and transparent communication are able to build trust and provide a better understanding of the goals of innovation. Through regular meetings and dialogues involving teachers, resistance to innovation can be minimized, so that teachers feel better prepared to accept and implement change. Second, empathy-based leadership has been proven to increase teachers' trust in the innovations implemented. Madrasah heads who not only provide instructions, but also listen to teachers' aspirations and offer solutions to their concerns, are able to create a more comfortable and supportive environment. This empathetic attitude makes teachers feel valued and supported in the change process, so they are more open to participating in innovation. Third, non-material incentives are a factor that encourages

the acceptance of innovation by teachers. Awards in the form of recognition, appreciation, and the opportunity to contribute in madrasah forums increase their motivation to adapt to change. Teachers who feel appreciated for their efforts and dedication tend to be more motivated to be actively involved in the innovations that are implemented. Thus, this study confirms that open communication, empathy-based leadership, and non-material rewards are effective strategies in overcoming resistance and increasing teacher involvement in educational quality innovation. The combination of these three factors creates a more collaborative work environment and supports sustainable change in the madrasah.

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